

NYC Department of Education / The Center For Digital Education

Next Generation Education infrastructure

Broward Schools' ETS Department was contacted by the Center for Digital Education in mid November with a request that the District join several large urban districts to discuss common goals and common challenges related to funding and building 21st century information technology infrastructure aligned to the needs of school systems. The meeting was hosted by the New York City Department of Education in Brooklyn New York. The Center requested that districts attending bring expertise in three focused areas; network/infrastructure design, E-Rate funding, and instructional technology. With the support of Superintendent Notter, Broward Schools sent Angela Coluzzi, Director of Network Integration, Jeanine Gendron, Director of Instructional Technology and Doug Pearce, District Network Coordinator and E-Rate manager. The following districts sent representatives to participate: New York City Public Schools (#1) Chicago Public Schools (#3), Clarke County Public Schools (#5), Broward County Public Schools (#6), and Eastern Suffolk BOCES (a consortium of schools in the NY area).

Over the day and a half round-table discussions, the group explored how technology will and should "Connect, Disrupt, & Transform" education IT in the coming years. Throughout the discussions, the participating districts candidly shared how they broadly approach all aspects of this endeavor, including everything from the development of an IT vision in support of education and business objectives to the way that Infrastructure build-outs are funded, procured, and managed to reliably and securely provide essential services to students and staff.

Despite facing almost identical challenges, each of the participating districts has grappled with the development of appropriate goals and strategies independently of one another over the past 20 years. The retreat had two overarching constructs; one was to ascertain ways in which major districts might be able to work together to leverage their working knowledge of information technology in the K-12 public schools environment, and leverage their market strength to ensure that products being sold in the education vertical not only align specifically to the changing needs of large urban districts, but that they are offered at prices reflecting, if and where possible, the combined purchasing volume of the participants. The second was to share tactical best practices among the participants - exploring how participating districts have monitored and managed their infrastructure, equipment, and service delivery models. Common E-Rate concerns were discussed as well.

Because each of the participating districts found a great deal value in the discussions, it was agreed that further discussions would take place via audio conference. The discussions are scheduled to take place about once a month – each with a particular focus on an aspect of IT operations in the K-12 environment. The Center for Digital Education is currently in the process of creating a web-space to facilitate ongoing collaboration among the participants. There was also an expressed hope that the group would be able to reconvene, perhaps in another district, again in the future.